

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN DURING JANUARY, 1861

This bulletin is intended to serve as a supplement to the series of Lincoln photographs now being released at intervals. During the period between the election of Abraham Lincoln and his first inaugural address it may help one to appreciate the atmosphere in which he was moving by reading some of the human interest stories gathered during this period. The New York Herald sent its representative to Springfield shortly after the election and he watched Lincoln's every move in this city, until the president was ready to leave for Washington. The excerpts found here are all from the 1861 issues of the New York Herald, and bear the dates of the correspondent's dispatches.

January 11

"The President elect looks very gravely. He says little with reference to the startling events in South Carolina but it is obvious that he is nevertheless most deeply concerned and exercised about their probable consequences."

January 12

After the correspondent had set forth Lincoln as an anti-slavery extentionist he made the following comment:

"That such are really his views no one that has ever enjoyed the privilege of his frank, unreserved conversation on public matters will deny; but I have reason to think—in fact, I know—that should he be called upon, after assuming his place at the helm of the Ship of State, to subordinate, for the sake of the harmony and peace of the country, his private opinions to public measures, he will not fail to make a patriotic response."

January 12

The correspondent appreciated fully the fact that the daily open house program Lincoln had been following was taxing his strength. An account of the change in program is set forth in the following lines:

"Although the President has been enjoying much more rest and peace since the abandonment of his daily levees than while they were in full blast, his appearance plainly indicates that an *otium cum dignitate* is not exactly the thing he is now enjoying. The concerned expression of his pallid

features tells a meaningful tale. I understand that petitions and recommendations for office come upon him in daily increasing showers as the time of his inauguration approaches."

January 16

In contrast to the reporter's observations on January 12 the four days interval seems to have changed Lincoln's manner from that of melancholy to mirthfulness. The correspondent writes:

"If it be true that mirthfulness be a sign of good health, the most gratifying conclusions as to the bodily status of the President elect may be drawn from the effect of the racy leader in last Saturday's Herald, on Cameron's discomfiture, is said to have had upon the President elect. I am informed that he laughed over it until tears coursed down his cheeks. Bothered and perplexed as he is the frequent application of such healthy medicine cannot but prove a relief and relaxation to him."

January 20

The correspondent for the New York Herald indulges in a little speculation as to what the future holds in store for Abraham Lincoln:

"With a single step he is transferred from the narrow obscure sphere of a provincial politician, to the proudest position any mortal can occupy. But there are no roses without thorns. The very luster that suddenly surrounds him may dazzle and lead him, instead of success and glory, to failure and degradation. The very tide of fortune that carried him so unexpectedly to the highest place in public life may sink the inexpert steersman. Shoals and rocks without number are ahead of him, and chances for utter wreck are equal to those for safe landing. Instead of saving the Union he may be called upon to bury it. Time, indeed, alone will decide whether the bestowal of the highest prize within the gift of the people is justly a source of envy."

January 22

The different cliques who were in Springfield in the interest of different aspirants to the cabinet drew this remark from Lincoln according to the reporter:

"He stated in as many words that in the selection of his constitutional advisors he had to consult the feelings and wishes, not of a few friends, but of the people at large."

January 24

The correspondence of this day seems to be a series of sketches:

"Few mortal beings ever carried a heavier load than that already resting, and likely to rest hereafter, on the shoulders of Abraham Lincoln. Nor can it be concealed that although he stands up manfully under its weight, the burden is taxing at times his pa-

tience and power of endurance to the utmost. . . . As to his correspondence, it has increased so wonderfully during the last fortnight that he finds it utterly impossible to read, not to speak of answering it all. . . . Since the departure of his spouse for the East, the President elect has been keeping house alone. Whatever his other qualifications may be, it is well known that in the management of the kitchen and other domestic concerns he is sadly destitute of both talent and experience. Hence it is more probable that upon the return of the master spirit of his home, whose functions he so imperfectly exercises, anything but praise will be bestowed upon him for the result of his administration during her absence."

January 26

In his correspondence for this day the reporter allows us to look in on a family episode that is interesting:

"The President elect was delighted last evening by the arrival on the Eastern train of Mrs. Lincoln and his oldest son, the Harvard student. He has been awaiting their return for the last three days. Dutiful husband and father that he is, he had proceeded to the railroad depot for three consecutive nights in his anxiety to receive them, and that in spite of the snow and cold. Mrs. Lincoln returned in good health and excellent spirits; whether she got a good scolding from Abraham for unexpectedly prolonging her absence I am unable to say; but I know that she found it rather difficult to part with the winter gayeties of New York City.

"Bob," the heir apparent to the President elect, has been the observed of all the Springfield girls today. He walked the streets this morning, bringing up the rear of the 'old man.' The effect of a residence within the improving influences of genteel, well-dressed and well-behaved Boston is plainly noticeable in his outward appearance, the comparative elegance of which, certainly presents a striking contrast to the loose, careless, awkward rigging of his Presidential father."

January 27

A brief character study of Lincoln by the correspondent follows:

"The most distinctive element of Mr. Lincoln's moral composition is his keen sense and comprehensive conscientiousness of duty. Upon taking the oath of office he will not be guided so much by his party predilections as by the federal constitution and laws. But these clearly and unavoidable define his line of action. They require him to secure obedience to their injunctions with all the means provided by them. That he will endeavor to fulfill the obligations thus imposed upon him, faithfully and fearlessly, may be expected with the utmost certainty."